

Status Rivalry and Cultural Evolution in Polynesia¹

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INTRODUCTION

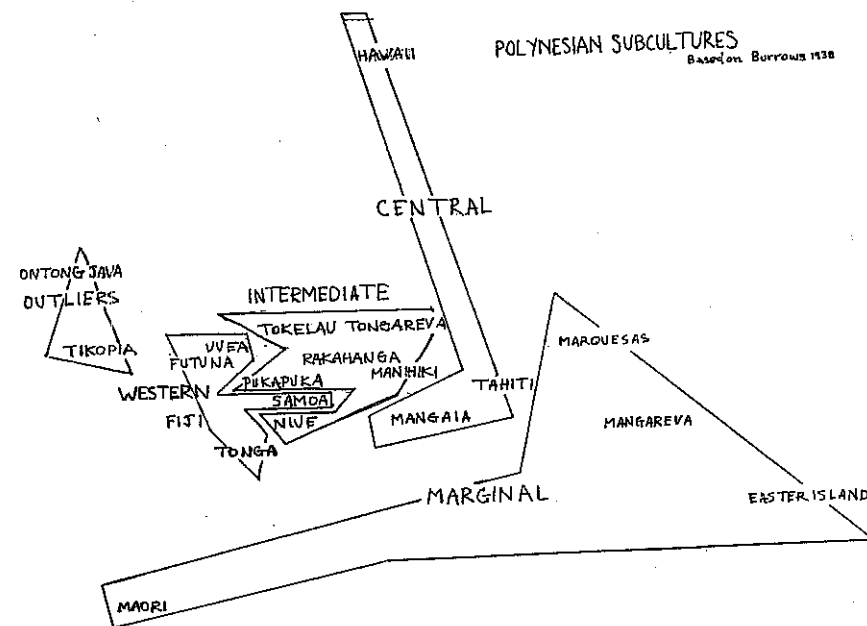
CULTURAL evolution, to rephrase Maitland's classic remark, will be history or nothing. If it is to be history, its proper focus is the culture area, or to be more precise, the comparative study of culture areas. A culture area comprises historically related societies each showing significant variations from a common area pattern. In these variations—their nature, origin, and direction—are revealed the basic processes of cultural development in the area, that is, its cultural evolution. It is from a comparison of culture areas rather than from the comparative study of historically unrelated societies that the more general and more meaningful laws of development may emerge. Boas (1896) was the first to suggest such a comparative procedure as a way to avoid the pitfalls into which the old comparative method had led the nineteenth-century evolutionists.

For a number of reasons, Polynesia is a particularly suitable area for such a comparative study.² Since the area was populated rather late, perhaps within the last 3,000 years (Spoehr 1952), its underlying historical unity is still abundantly clear—even linguistic variations are relatively minor (Elbert 1953). At the same time, Polynesian cultures vary in a continuous series from the "simple" atoll societies of Ontong Java and Pukapuka to the highly organized "feudal" kingdoms of Hawaii. These variations suggest an evolutionary sequence, which is borne out by evidence from tribal historical traditions (presumably reliable for comparatively recent events) and from other sources.

The present paper takes as its starting point the dominant values of Polynesian culture, those involving concern with social status. Polynesian society is founded upon social inequality and, despite an aristocratic doctrine of hereditary rank, permits its members to compete for position, for prestige, and for power. In one way or another, then, the history of every Polynesian society has been affected by status rivalry, and under the proper conditions the effects of this rivalry have been felt in every vital center of the culture. Rivalry raises issues and provokes conflicts that can never be fully resolved. It promotes a sequence of culture changes that take their character and direction in part from the momentum of status rivalry itself and in part from the particular physical and cultural setting of each island. Thus, the differing ecologies of atolls and high islands, variations in population density, varieties of subsistence techniques, levels of economic productivity, systems of property relations, the role of migrations and military conquests, diffusion, and, finally, the specific historical "accidents" that occur in wars, migrations, and contests for power—all influence and are in turn influenced by the dominant motive of status rivalry. Many facets of culture, on the other hand, are only barely

touched by status rivalry and lie, therefore, outside the scope of this paper. Data on pertinent physical features are presented in Table 1 and, on diffusion, in the accompanying chart of subculture areas.

From the point of view of status rivalry, Polynesian societies can be ranged in approximate order along a scale that expresses variations in the



character and intensity of the conflict for position and power. Reading in ascending order, from Ontong Java to Hawaii, this scale divides into three historical phases which I call "Traditional," "Open," and "Stratified." The Traditional may be considered to represent early stages of Polynesian cultural development, the Open to be illustrative of transitional conditions, and the Stratified, of the culminating phases. Table 1 shows the postulated sequence of cultural development. The societies at the midpoint of each phase are its prototype representatives, and those at the ends are transitional since each phase shades into the next. Retrogressions may have taken place but were incidental to the main lines of development. The process of development, needless to say, was far more complex than the schematic presentation that follows.

THE TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

Maori represented the Traditional order at the peak of its development. All Maori tribes claimed descent from common first-immigrant ancestors, and genealogical bonds along with more vital common economic and social interests linked tribe, lineage (*hapu*), and family (*whanau*) into a tight unit.

TABLE 1
POLYNESIAN ECOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHY

	Physical Character	Sq. Miles	Pop.	Pop./Sq. Mile	Productivity
TRADITIONAL					
Ontong Java	Atoll	n.a.	5,000	...	Marginal
Tikopia	Volcanic	3	1,300	433	Marginal
Pukapuka	Atoll	2	1,500	750	Marginal
Tokelau	Atoll	4	1,200	300	Marginal
Manihiki	Atoll	1.5	1,000	285	Marginal
Rakahanga	Atoll	2			
Maori	High	102,000	100,000	9.8	Abundance
Tongareva	Atoll	6	2,000	333	Marginal
Futuna	Volcanic	25	1,000	40	Abundance
Uvea	Volcanic	23	3,000	130	Abundance
Samoa	High	1,200	50,000	41	Abundance
OPEN					
Niue	Atoll	100	5,000	50	Marginal
Easter	High	50	3,000	60	Marginal
Mangaia	Volcanic	27	3,000	111	Abundance
Marquesas	High	400	100,000	250	Marginal
STRATIFIED					
Tonga	High	269	25,000	93	Abundance
Mangareva	Volcanic	6	2,000	333	Marginal
Tahiti	High	593	100,000	168	Abundance
Hawaii	High	6,435	200,000	32	Abundance

Statistics from Freeman (1951) and from the ethnographies. Productivity is an estimate from the ethnographies. Population figures are not very reliable.

Hereditary rank set the pattern for political authority so that the senior male of one of the senior lineages of the tribe was tribal chief (*ariki*); the senior male in the senior line in each *hapu* was *hapu* chief; and a senior male was head of his *whanau*. As everywhere in Polynesia, *mana* was an aspect of rank. The Maori related *mana* directly to seniority and protected it by *tapu*. They regarded all males and high-born females as in some degree sacred, attributing the highest sacredness to the *ariki*. By vague genealogical criteria junior lines shaded into commoner status whose lowest branches sometimes served their higher-ranking kin as servants and as menials. Slavery was a temporary condition of war captives. Rank defined authority, economic and other privileges, responsibilities, and etiquette. Conferred by birth, it was demeaned by cowardice, low marriages, capture in war, and by other lapses of dignity. Lost rank was lost *mana*, and for that reason alone, as Best has noted, a Maori vigorously resisted affronts to his rank. When, as rarely happened, chiefs were incompetent, they were replaced.

Maori offered only limited social mobility. Other Traditional societies allowed for more. Manu'a (eastern Samoa) had markedly subverted hereditary rank without quite abandoning it. The *Tui Manu'a*, as high chief, and all subordinate chiefs and talking chiefs held hereditary rank in the Great Fono, but adroit and ambitious men advanced their rank and influence by the judicious use of wealth or assumed leadership outside the formal scheme of the *fono*. In Tongareva, more strongly committed to hereditary rank, wars and conquests often reduced rulers to the status of subjects. There, because of the importance of war, land-wealth and leadership—the ingredients of military success—almost rivaled inherited rank as avenues to power. A similar situation prevailed in Futuna and in Uvea. Futuna, Uvea, and Manua, in fact, come close to being Open societies.

Even in such closely knit atoll communities as Manihiki-Rakahanga, lineage rivalries disturbed the orderly succession to chieftainship. Traditions there tell how a dispute between the two wives of an *ariki* over the question of whose son should succeed him was compromised by the creation of a new title, "Land Distributor." The new title-holder then rallied his supporters and eventually two *arikis* divided the rule—unequally.

In several places hereditary rank had barely developed. In Ontong Java a strong man and his followers established the first kingship and, after a series of dynastic wars, one lineage triumphed and set up succession by seniority. Apart from the offices of king and lineage head, rank was of no importance. Rank meant little more in Tikopia and in Pukapuka. Traditions from Pukapuka also suggest that hereditary rank came late and that the first rulers were the old men. Later, four *aliki* contested for supremacy: the winner installed his lineage as the ruling dynasty. But here, too, only the chiefs held rank, the rest of the population being known simply as "the people." In the Tokelaus, age, ability, and material substance were the true measures of status, which was, however, but lightly considered. Only the *matai* ("headman") held office by seniority.

These brief illustrations show the unstable foundations of graded hereditary rank in the Traditional societies. Even those societies, such as the Maori, that had fully incorporated the tradition of graded hereditary rank, broke with it when it conflicted with personal ambition and with differences in ability. These societies retained their traditional character against the Polynesian dictum that fitness supersedes birth only because the tests of fitness were not too severe.

THE OPEN SOCIETIES

Chronic guerrilla warfare posed the most demanding tests of fitness for the aristocracies of the Open societies. As their histories show, the old aristocracies were eventually pushed into the background by warriors and by resourceful political leaders.

Niue had neither aristocracy, priesthood, nor genealogies. The real powers were the warriors (*toa*), who ranked first in the social scale ahead of the *fekafekua*, "servants of the toa," and the *lalo tangata*, "low people," or those who ran away in battle. Niuean traditions, however, describe an initial migration

from Samoa and a later invasion from Tonga that brought in a kingship along Tongan lines. In that case, the Niueans may very well have had an aristocracy that later became inconsequential.

On Easter Island a more virile status scale based on wealth and military prowess overshadowed the traditional scheme. The *ariki mau* was a high priest, while the warriors were the temporal rulers. Tribal traditions speak of a common ancestor who was the discoverer and first king of the island. He apportioned the island among his children, each of whom then founded a tribe. One of the tribes controlled the *ariki* title. In the beginning, Métraux has suggested (1940), the kings were considered to be deities and held absolute power, but in the end the warriors took over, leaving the king only the prestige of his supernatural powers and certain personal privileges.

The Marquesans came closest to maintaining a traditional aristocracy. Yet here, too, achievement scored first. Position and influence went to those who had done most for the tribe. By such criteria the *toa* and the rich stood high. Chieftainship was ordinarily seized by those who had won powerful backing by diplomatic marriages, strategic alliances, and by effective displays of wealth and leadership.

Mangaia illustrates best the transitional character of the Open societies. On that little volcanic island a hereditary aristocracy had been eclipsed by the warriors (*toa*), who commanded the highest prestige, the largest estates, captive vassals, friendly satellites, and because of all these, authority. The hereditary *ariki* held the highest rank, but the effective ruler was the Temporal Lord of Mangaia, chosen from among the greatest warriors. Mangaian traditions tell of efforts to make the Temporal Lordship hereditary. But the conditions that undermined the old aristocracy did not favor its replacement by a new one. The shifting tides of military fortune constantly reshuffled the social order as first one tribe triumphed and then another. At the same time, the urgent requirements of warfare placed a high premium upon fighting skills, upon wealth, and, in general, upon the ability to command followers. The high social mobility perpetuated by these conditions came close to creating a socioeconomic class in place of the older scheme of hereditary rank.

High social mobility was one step toward stratification; the weakening of kinship ties was another. Strong kin ties may be compatible with graded hereditary rank but not with stratification that cuts kinship solidarity at the class line. By the same token, weakened kin ties favor stratification. Traditional kinship governed in Mangaia, but not exclusively. Warfare rearranged descent lines and conditions of residence as men sought safety with their wives' lineage when that lineage was the enemy. Their descendants might then remain with the maternal lineage, return to the paternal fold, or move into still another lineage, depending upon military conditions. By Polynesian standards the lineages became conglomerate, and the traditional patrilocal household became a *mélange* of immediate family kin, distant kin, war captives and others who served as menials in return for protection. Captives had the choice of tribal citizenship or of defiant servitude. Even as servants they

shared, along with kinsmen, in some of the privileges of their masters. Warfare added one other strain upon kinship bonds: because of frequent changes of family allegiances, close kin met on the battlefield as enemies. In one such instance, a son killed his own father. Strong warriors heading the largest households as lords and protectors became centers of direct political power. Chiefs bolstered their might by adding to their household a body of trusted warriors.

The Open societies then were definitely exploitative—less so than the Stratified, but far more than the Traditional. In Mangaia, the exploited were mainly the outsiders. Exploitation of outsiders, however, may well set a standard for the exploitation of one's own, as seems to have been the case in the Marquesas and in Niue. There, weak and poor families sought the protection of strong chiefs whom they served as subordinates and to whom they paid tribute for grants of land. These societies have been called emergent "feudal" orders (Handy 1923; Loeb 1926). Because land rights remained open to all tribesmen, the Open societies cannot be regarded as stratified. Even so, some Marquesan chiefs had begun to regard tribal lands as their own (Handy 1923).

Why the Open societies stopped just short of stratification is not quite clear. Perhaps the indecisiveness of their wars prevented the consolidation of power and kept the land systems fluid. Military indecisiveness itself was probably due to rugged terrain, food scarcity, and loose political organization. In Mangaia, to return to that example, bands of enemy warriors might resist indefinitely from the shelter of its many caves. Food shortages and limited economic elasticity equalized contending rivals. Even more important may have been their political doctrine of warfare. Because they felt land shortage as their main problem, Mangaian victors failed to organize for their own benefit the crop production of defeated tribes but, instead, dispossessed them from fertile taro lands onto unproductive scrub lands. This may have been the least efficient way to strengthen the victor's economy. Moreover, since their goal was to displace an enemy from his land, there was little basis for a negotiated peace. The enfeebling wars went on.

Stratification seems to have resulted from the consolidation of military gains. So long as the Open societies could not achieve relative political stability, the lines of privilege remained too fluid to facilitate the formation of classes.

THE STRATIFIED SOCIETIES

Tonga, the least stratified of the Stratified societies, held fully to the formal structure of graded hereditary rank but changed its economic content. All Tongans were ranked from the sacred *Tui Tonga* at the top to the lowliest commoner at the bottom, and all social grades were linked by genealogical records that gave commoners the right to assert their kinship with chiefs. The *Tui Tonga*, however, held title to all land and awarded holdings to chiefs according to their rank as well as in proportion to their services to him. The gentry in turn allotted land to their kin on the same principle. Details of the land system, unfortunately, are vague. Thomson (1894) and others cited by Gifford (1929:

170) stressed the sovereign rights of the *Tui Tonga* over land, and Gifford (1929:174) summed up, "A chief . . . could dispossess his commoners at any time, or transfer them from one part of his land to another, even though they opposed the move." Apparently, the land system had driven a wedge between noble and commoner and hence among kinsmen. In some respects, in fact, the commoners were treated as were the alien captives in the Open societies (for examples, see Gifford 1929:127).

The orderly arrangement of landholdings by rank was frequently upset by wars, revolts, and political intrigues. To hold a precarious political balance chiefs rewarded their friends with land and expropriated their rivals (Martin 1817). In this way, the highest-ranking titles sometimes lost much of their holdings and the lower ranks of gentry came to command the largest estates. Hereditary rank continued to rule etiquette, but influence and power came from landownership.

The traditional history of Tonga describes the gradual usurpation of power from the priest-king *Tui Tonga* and the consequent increase in authority of secular rulers, the *Tui Kanokupolu*. As early as the fifteenth century, these traditions say, ambitious lesser chiefs arranged for the assassination of one *Tui Tonga* after another, acts that led to much turmoil and warfare. As a measure of self-defense, the then King Kauulufonua introduced a buffer by naming his son the secular executive with the title *Tui Haa Takalaua* and with supervision of the plantations as one of his main duties. Later (seventeenth century) the *Takalaua* named his son as a land supervisor with the title *Tui Kanokupolu*, and the latter's line eventually became the real powers. The traditions do not deal with changes in the pattern of landholding. However, frequent and prolonged civil wars for succession during which the Tongan islands were divided into many fortified garrisons may very well have paved the way to a "feudalization" of landholdings. The fact that political power finally went to overseers suggests further that control over land had become a major issue in Tonga after the *Tui Tonga*-ship had begun to decline.

The conflict between the claims of hereditary rank and landed wealth raged even more fiercely in Mangareva, the most "open" of the Stratified societies. The theory of a graded hereditary aristocracy with a supreme chief (*aka-ariki*) at its head lay at the heart of the social order. It was a theory, however, honored more in the breach. Dynastic wars inevitably followed the death of a ruler. The victor seized his enemies' lands and gave them to his followers. Hereditary rank never lost its prestige, but the power and influence that wealth conferred were not easily overcome. Mangarevan society became so mobile, in fact, that for a time a line of commoners held the high office of *aka-ariki*.

Increased social mobility and the system of land tenure accented class lines. Eventually, ten aristocratic families came to own all the land, each ruling its territory as a "feudal" domain. Landowners subleased land-shares to kin and supporters, in return for tribute and military services. At the bot-

tom of the social scale the landless "rats" lived as despised and hungry fishermen, and often had to rob graves for food.

Mangarevan traditions are narrations of dynastic wars, fratricidal strife, and interrupted successions, in the course of which power went from the supreme *ariki* to contending powerful chiefs. The strong expropriated the weak, and the vanquished were driven from the land altogether. Mangarevan traditions bear out rather clearly the postulated sequence: Traditional-Open-Stratified.

In Tahiti, hereditary rank was a more stable feature of the social order than in either Mangareva or Tonga. Chiefs (*arii*) and the landed gentry (*raatira*) were graded by seniority and held landed estates proportionate with their rank. They owed tribute and military services to the supreme chief, but their lands were immune from royal seizure. The bulk of the population consisted of the landless *manahune*, so separated socially from the gentry as to be considered by them as an alien group.

Tahitian traditions speak of an earlier more democratic society conquered and reorganized by invaders. Handy (1930) has, therefore, advanced the theory that Tahitian society was a fusion of a simpler indigenous culture with that of a more advanced alien invading culture. Coming presumably from nearby Raiatea in the seventh century, the invaders set themselves up as the rulers, while the *raatira* came into being by intermarriages of followers of the conquerors and the local population. While details of the process are lacking, the suggestion, at least, is that the *raatira* were given land grants in return for military services and that the *manahune* were, accordingly, forcibly expropriated.

Hawaii carried forward all the features of the Stratified societies and, at the same time, resolved the conflict between centralized and decentralized authority by granting to the supreme chief (*mōi*) title to all land in his domain. This differed from the rights of the *Tui Tonga* in that each new Hawaiian administration systematically expropriated its opponents, rewarded its supporters, and curtailed the influence of potential rivals by giving them estates smaller than due their rank. By this "spoils system" the Hawaiian rulers frankly acknowledged the equation: land-wealth equals power. The spoils system promoted social mobility among the upper ranks and left the lower ranks least disturbed. As in all the Stratified societies, land relations were "feudal." The gentry held land in return for tribute and services, and the commoners (*makaa'inana*) were the landless plantation workers who could be—although they rarely were—evicted. An outcaste group, the despised *kauwa*, were totally removed from the land.

Hawaiian traditions describe close relations with Tahiti; in fact, Buck (in Handy 1933) believes that the Hawaiian nobility came from the Society Islands to impose their rule upon the natives, who became the landless commoners. According to the traditions, the power of the *mōi* over the gentry was won by slow degrees and by hard measures. In the course of wars and re-

volts new ruling lines were created, many were deprived of their landholdings, and others received great estates (Fornander 1916). The ultimate centralization of Hawaiian government came under Kamehameha I, who, like his Tahitian contemporary Pomare I, used European help to carry out traditional political objectives.

All in all, the histories of the Stratified societies point to the sequence: Traditional-Open-Stratified.

PARALLEL SEQUENCES IN CLOSELY RELATED ISLANDS

Another interesting line of evidence on Polynesian evolution comes from a comparison of very closely related neighboring cultures. The pattern of variations shown by Polynesia as a whole apparently has been recapitulated in the histories of individual Polynesian societies and is repeated again among neighboring societies. In this connection, the situation in the Marquesas would have been extremely illuminating if detailed cultural comparisons of all the islands had been possible. Handy (1923) has pointed out that Marquesan cultures varied, the southern islands having less definite social stratification, less definite private ownership of land, and chiefs of lesser sacredness than the northern islands. The southern people, he noted, were more assertive and more independent-minded.

The fact that the variations seemingly characteristic of the area as a whole show up in neighboring islands would seem to demonstrate, first, that these differences are the result of internal developments and of migrations by which a parent culture is carried forward (and sometimes backward) in a new environment, and, second, that the conditions promoting evolution were everywhere active in Polynesia.

Among the societies that are most clearly related by tradition as well as by trait similarities are Samoa-Tonga-Niue; Maori-Tahiti-Hawaii; Easter Island-Marquesas-Mangareva. Other combinations can be considered, but these three illustrate the point well enough. The chart of Polynesian subcultures shows that closely related societies may share common traits and still have different social systems. This is because in evolution new characteristics may emerge but the bulk of changes consists of the repatterning of traditional traits.

Samoa-Tonga-Niue: Samoa and Tonga (Fiji has been omitted from what should be a triad, because of its Melanesian affiliations) are clearly sister cultures; Niuean traditions link it to immigrants and invaders from both. Samoa is the Traditional order being undermined by political ambitions; Niue is a Samoan system shattered beyond recognition by warfare; and Tonga is the evolution of the Samoan type into stratification via warfare.

Marquesas, Easter Island, and Mangareva represent variations in "openness." In Easter Island the contest for social position and power led to the exploitation of captives. In the Marquesas, where "tribal democracy" was still strong, some chiefs had begun to usurp land which they had held in cus-

tody for the tribe. In Mangareva this process had gone to the point of complete expropriation.

In the *Maori-Tahiti-Hawaii* group, Maori stands as the culmination of the Traditional order, Tahiti is a stratified phase in which the power and position of local chiefs were sustained by their inalienable land rights, while Hawaii was the Polynesian endpoint in centralized power. If we include Mangaia, which claims kinship with Tahiti, the sequence of variations is the more complete.

PARALLEL CULTURAL CHANGES

Fundamental changes in the Polynesian systems of status appear to have produced major modifications in many basic Polynesian institutions and cultural values. Some basic changes in government, land systems, and kinship have already been brought out. The following section summarizes those additional changes that seem to be most closely related to the evolution inspired by status rivalry. The correlations are not necessarily clear-cut. They refer to central tendencies and generally follow the gradations of the societies constituting a type. Thus, the more "open" of the Traditional societies are apt to show many of the characteristics of the Open societies. It was obviously impossible in this article to present detailed cultural comparisons. Finally, it should be noted that, while the ethnographic data for this section are reasonably adequate, they are not complete.

AUTHORITY

1. *Government changed from a kinship to a territorial basis.* This very significant finding has already been made by Burrows (1939). I would restate it as follows. *Traditional:* Although chiefs ruled over territories in some places, kinship was still the main source of authority. *Open:* Authority shifted from senior kinsmen to strong leaders, and, while it served the interests of a kin-unified group, it was also exercised over captives and other aliens, thus introducing a territorial principle. *Stratified:* The territorial principle was consolidated through the fuller incorporation of conquered peoples into the administrative territory. At the same time, authority and hereditary succession were strengthened to bolster the ruling dynasties.

2. *Government began to rely increasingly upon physical force.* *Traditional:* Chiefs rarely used force against their own people. Futuna may have been one exception. Manu'an chiefs had life-and-death powers over their subjects but rarely used them. *Open:* Force was used mainly against aliens. *Stratified:* Force, including severe and capricious punishment against one's own people, was common.

3. *Government became more highly organized.* *Traditional:* Government was informal and in its most elaborate forms consisted of chiefs and a council of subchiefs and perhaps priestly advisors. *Open:* Government was equally informal. *Stratified:* Mangareva, as the most "open," had, accordingly, the most

informal government. The others had developed a court and a body of specialized officials. The most elaborate was the Hawaiian court, a product not only of more complex administrative problems but of an interest in broadening the base of government by adding officials and creating new status positions.

4. *Religion became an official arm of government.* Government and religion were closely linked in all Polynesian societies and therefore, as governments developed, so did their religious sanctions. *Traditional:* Priests and chiefs worked together for community interests, and in some places chief and priest were the same person. *Open:* Rule was mainly by strong men who were less closely dependent upon the priesthood for their authority. In Mangaia, for example, priests who sought political advantage for themselves lost their religious immunities. *Stratified:* A highly organized priesthood followed very closely the political aims of the government, serving primarily the interests of the ruling dynasty—although it could also oppose them—and secondarily those of the community as a whole. Priests were political advisors and regulated the *tapu* system. The Tongan priesthood was the least organized.

5. *Tapu became a political instrument.* *Tapu*, as the ritual counterpart of *mana* and as a religious device for social control, was universal in Polynesia. As political power developed, *tapu* quite logically became its bulwark. *Traditional:* *Tapu* emphasized the sacredness of the high-born and was used to conserve crops. *Open:* Mangaia and Easter Island had begun to apply *tapu* directly in the interests of their rulers. *Stratified:* While economic *tapus* served community interests as well, they primarily sanctioned the political and economic privileges of chiefs, gentry, and priesthood.

6. *Tapu came to be enforced by physical as well as by religious sanctions.* This is a corollary to point 5. As *tapus* became political, their enforcement also became political. *Traditional:* *Tapu* violations were self-punishing. *Open:* Mangaia and Easter Island had penal sanctions. *Stratified:* All used penal sanctions.

7. *The attitude toward human life became more callous.* As warfare, along with conflicts for power and economic advantage, became more prominent, rulers took upon themselves god-like powers over human life. This showed itself, for example, in the attitude of the Tongan chief who cut off the left arms of his cooks simply out of caprice (Gifford 1929:127). It was best revealed, however, in the practice of human sacrifices. *Traditional:* Human sacrifices were either nonexistent or, as in Samoa and Maori, infrequent and minor. *Open:* Human sacrifices were important except in Niue, where they did not occur at all. *Stratified:* Human sacrifices were more common, and in Tahiti and Hawaii reached great proportions. Tahitian traditions say that conditions were once so good they made no sacrifices. Then things got bad, and they began to sacrifice pigs. Finally, a king told them, "We must tremble with fear," and he introduced human sacrifices (Henry 1928:127). Victims were captives, the humble, and the politically unreliable.

8. *First-fruits ceremonies became a formal taxation device.* All Polynesian chiefs had first-fruits privileges. In the *Traditional* and in the *Open* these

tributes were ceremonial, and the offerings were token symbols. In the *Stratified* the ceremonialism of first fruits continued but collections became formal, obligatory, and signs of political loyalty. The redistribution of first fruits was also universal, but in the *Stratified* societies this often became little more than a gesture. In Tonga, for example, the lowly were given spoiled meat considered unsuitable for the gentry (Martin 1817:132).

PROPERTY

9. *Land tenure changed from a tribal to a feudal basis.* (This point has already been discussed.)

10. *The lower orders came to bear the brunt of food shortages.* All Polynesian societies accepted some measure of responsibility for the community, but they differed in the degree to which they did so. *Traditional:* Sharing a common food supply was common. *Open:* The strong took a larger share but accepted responsibility for their followers. *Stratified:* The commoners were neglected. In Mangareva they often had no recourse against inconsiderate landlords. But, as a rule, everywhere in the *Stratified* societies they could leave a lord and join the estate of another.

11. *The distribution of wealth became uneven.* In all Polynesian societies the chief was the center of food redistribution. In the *Traditional* the distribution was roughly equal; in the *Open*, Mangaia and the Marquesas had uneven systems favoring the chiefs or warriors. In the *Stratified*, chiefs and gentry invariably held the largest shares. It is true that each subchief redistributed a portion of his share among his followers. By doing so, however, he bolstered his own political position.

12. *Property attitudes became more predatory.* The *Traditional* valued property for the physical comforts it provided and as symbols of rank, but chiefs were only mildly acquisitive and essentially nonpredatory. The *Open* were predatory mainly at the expense of aliens. They indulged in rivalrous ostentatious property displays. In the *Stratified*, wealth was both the price and the reward of power. Thus, land was the object of predatory attack and land boundaries were carefully marked and zealously defended.

13. *Land became alienable.* *Traditional:* Land was usually vested in a kinship group, and that made it inalienable except in relatively infrequent cases of conquest. *Open:* Conquest and the absorption of captives led to a more fluid tenure system. *Stratified:* Commoners had lost their traditional rights to land, while, except for Tahiti, even the gentry were no longer secure in their tenure.

KINSHIP

14. *Kinship bonds weakened.* All Polynesian societies maintained the theory of tribal unity through kinship and allowed commoners to trace their kinship to chiefs. Changes that occurred were more in practice than in formal structure. *Traditional:* Kinship unity was very strong, and even among the high ranks intrafamilial conflicts were occasional. *Open:* Except for Niue, which was

more like the *Traditional* in this respect, wars and the internal struggle for power realigned kin and provoked intense intrakin conflict. *Stratified*: Kin ties were strongly affected by political considerations. Discord was at its peak in Mangareva. Class lines reduced kin ties to mere formal recognition. In Mangareva a chief killed a commoner relative who had addressed him by a kin term. In Hawaii the dispersal of kin had gone farthest of all (Burrows 1939).

15. *Political and status motives in marriage became more important.* Rank was a factor in marriage in all Polynesian societies. As status and power became more important, marriage continued to be an advantageous avenue for social advancement. Marriage ritual accordingly was most elaborated among the upper ranks in the *Stratified* societies.

16. *Caste developed only in the Stratified societies.* Tahiti and Hawaii drew hard caste lines. Caste may be regarded as an intensification of the rank consciousness present in almost all Polynesian societies.

POSITION OF WOMEN

17. *Tapu restrictions on women became more severe.* All Polynesian societies regarded women as in some way defiling. In the *Traditional* and *Open* societies, *tapu* restrictions were, on the whole, minor (except for Uvea and Maori). In the *Stratified* these tended to become more severe, particularly in Hawaii where husband and wife needed separate living quarters.

18. *Women gained more political rights.* High-ranking women received ceremonial recognition in all Polynesian societies, but only in the *Stratified* (and in the Marquesas) could they become *ariki*.

19. *Primogeniture came to override sex in political succession.* This is a corollary to point 18.

SEXUAL PRACTICES

20. *Sexual orgies became more prominent.* All Polynesian societies permitted considerable premarital sexual freedom at the same time that they required premarital chastity of high-born women. In Tahiti and Hawaii, orgiastic sexual rites increased postmarital sexual license.

INFANTICIDE

21. Infanticide occurred sporadically in Polynesia but, where it did, it showed interesting variations. In Pukapuka infanticide was in response to population pressure, in Tahiti it was to maintain caste lines, and in Hawaii it was to avoid the nuisance of child-rearing (Malo).

MOURNING

22. *Violence in mourning began to turn outward.* Almost all Polynesian mourners showed grief by beating or gashing themselves. However, only in the *Stratified* societies did mourners for a chief or a king turn their violent expressions of grief against other people as well. Tongans, for example, fought bloody

sham battles, while Hawaiian and Tahitian mourners killed or maimed anyone unfortunate enough to get in their way.

WARFARE

23. *Warfare became more prominent and more serious.* *Traditional*: warfare was of minor importance except for Maori, Tongareva, Futuna, and Uvea. It was virtually state policy in all the *Open* and *Stratified*, where the motives were usually predatory and where the chiefs and the outstanding warriors were the main beneficiaries of military success.

24. *Combat became more cruel.* The Polynesians were not gentle warriors. However, the *Open* and *Stratified* encouraged, even by Polynesian standards, unusual acts of ferocity against enemies.

PRIESTHOOD

25. *The priesthood became more elaborately organized.* Except for Maori, priests were shamans or priest-chiefs, or else the professional priesthood was very simply organized in the *Traditional*. The *Open* (except for Niue which had no priests at all) and the *Stratified* had the most elaborate priesthoods. These reached their peak in Tahiti and in Hawaii.

26. *The priesthood became more political* (see point 4).

27. *Ceremonialism increased* (see point 26).

28. *Ritual became confined to rulers and to the upper ranks.* In part this was a logical development of the doctrine of *mana* that tended to ritualize the life of the high-born, and in part it reflected increasing stratification. In the *Stratified* societies it was leading to the secularization of the lives of the commoners.

DEITIES

29. *The gods became more vengeful and awesome.* The distribution of the major Polynesian deities such as *Tane*, *Lono*, *Tu*, and *Tangaroa* covered most of the islands, but the attributes of the pantheon varied significantly. In the *Traditional* the deities were apt to be either beneficent, neutral, or, at worst, mischievous. In the *Open* and *Stratified* the gods were more threatening and inspired terror by their demands for human offerings.

30. *The gods became more diversified.* This followed no absolute course. However, the *Traditional* (except for Maori) relied upon fewer deities, for the most part ancestor gods, while the *Stratified* had the greatest variety of gods and cults. The situation in the *Open* societies was mixed. Niue, Mangaia, and Easter Island were more like the *Traditional*, and the Marquesas approached the *stratified*.

AFTERLIFE

31. *Status entered more into the conception of the afterlife.* The *Traditional* attributed no rank distinctions to the afterlife, the *Open* recognized a better afterlife for brave warriors, and the *Stratified* were the most status-conscious of all. Tongans did not even acknowledge that commoners had souls (Martin 1817, II: 136).

32. *The conception of the afterlife became more unpleasant.* The *Traditional* regarded the afterlife either as more pleasant or as no less pleasant than life on earth. The *Open* and *Stratified* clearly differentiated between good and bad other-worlds and raised the prospects of a most unpleasant afterlife.

SORCERY

33. *Sorcery became more threatening.* All Polynesian societies knew sorcery. In the *Traditional*, only Maori used sorcery actively and even then mainly against other tribes. In the *Open*, sorcery was common only in Mangaia. In the *Stratified*, sorcery was common and very threatening in all.

34. *Supernatural causes of illness became more varied.* Social delinquency or religious neglect brought about supernatural punishment in all Polynesian societies. In the *Stratified*, however, the unprovoked hostility of the gods as well as human hostility in the form of sorcery added considerably to the recognized causes of illness. Chiefs were common victims of envy-inspired sorcery.

OMENS

35. *Concern with omens increased.* The *Traditional* recognized some omens, the *Open* many more, and the *Stratified* were the most preoccupied with omens of impending trouble. Hawaiians, whose lives may have been the least secure, were particularly troubled about omens in building and occupying houses.

CONCLUSION

The far-reaching cultural changes correlating with the three postulated types of Polynesian society follow such a consistent course that they lend strong support to the evolutionary hypothesis that has been presented here. They show that Polynesian cultural evolution was not merely a growth in complexity—a vague concept at best—but a development of stronger political controls, more exploitative relationships, more violence, more conflict, and greater general insecurity. The material reveals how step by step the benign casual ethos of cultures such as Pukapuka and Manu'a, for example, is transformed into the fiercer and more violent outlooks of Mangarevans, Tahitians, and Hawaiians. The Hawaiians went so far as to introduce a professional outlook and a passion for betting into the traditional Polynesian devotion to sports. At the same time, we observe the growth of skills in architecture, agriculture, political administration, and in the arts of poetry and balladry. Status rivalry produced conflict and the social and psychological consequences of strife; but it also played a prominent part in promoting craft specialization, the essential precursor of technical progress.

In another positive sense the Polynesians did not accept meekly the increased pressure of arbitrary authority. They checked cruel rulers by revolts and palace *coups* and, if these measures were not appropriate, they plotted private revenges or joined with more humane overlords. It is most striking that all the *Stratified* societies found it necessary to teach chiefs to be "...

humble, kind, sympathetic, open-hearted," as Kepelino said of Hawaii (Beckwith 1932:140). Tahitian kings were warned:

Let not the decrees of death be too frequent, for your own bones will follow the road to death. It will be like the tearing down of your own home by the warrior when the night of darkness is enveloping you, the night that hides sin. Watch your people. Arouse not that which will pain them. You may not be able to find the cure [Handy 1930:41].

In these illustrative injunctions to rulers we see the emergence into explicit form of an ethical code that runs contrary to the spirit of the moment in the *Stratified* societies. (Malo, who was a member of the Hawaiian court, brings this out very clearly [1951:72 ff.].) This, too, we may regard as a significant evolutionary development.

Finally, and in a more general vein, the Polynesian material shows that major cultural changes resulted not so much from the introduction of new elements but rather from a rearrangement and an intensification of traditional widespread Polynesian practices. Thus, new emergents such as "feudal" land tenure, to take but one example, had their roots in the practice of family land supervisors. Yet, once the system of land tenure had shifted to gentry-controlled holdings, the repercussions upon Polynesian society were fundamental indeed.

NOTES

¹ The present paper is part of a study in progress on status in Oceania. I am grateful to Sarah Lawrence College for a faculty fellowship that helped get the study launched. I am also indebted to Dr. Margaret Mead for helpful criticism.

² A proper evolutionary study of Polynesia should certainly embrace all of Oceania and Micronesia, in particular, where Yanaihara (1946) and Murdock (1948) have already called attention to evolutionary sequences. Because I regard this paper as a trial run of a particular method of analysis rather than as an attempted definitive study of Polynesian evolution, I have preferred to simplify the approach as much as possible. For this reason, I have omitted discussion of Fiji, which should ordinarily be linked with Samoa and Tonga, and I have dealt with Samoa only in terms of Manu'a. Western Samoa, more warlike, presents a somewhat different picture. I do not, however, believe that the omissions I have mentioned materially affect the main postulates presented in this paper.

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